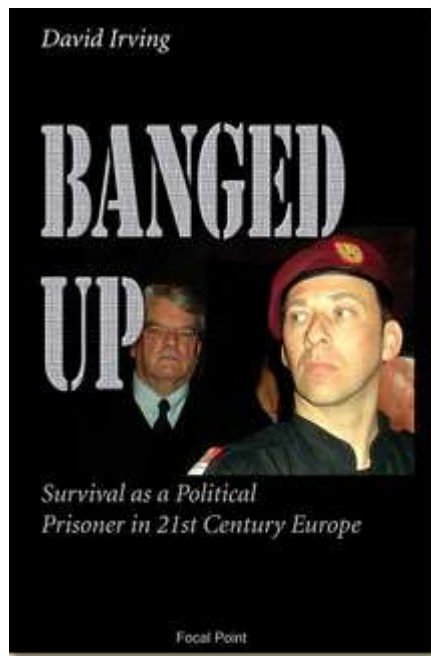


Banged Up

A Review

[Richard A. Widmann](#)

Banged Up: Survival as a Political Prisoner in 21st Century Europe, by David Irving Focal Point Publications, Windsor, England, 2008. 146pp., illustrated, with notes, indexed.



David Irving's Banged Up: Survival as a Political Prisoner in 21st Century Europe.
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Banged Up is David Irving's autobiographical account of his arrest and 400 days of solitary confinement in an Austrian prison for having presented what amounted to inconvenient history at a lecture some 16 years prior. This handsome edition jammed with many photographs describes Irving's failed attempt to speak in Austria in November 2005 and the harrowing details of his capture by State Police with weapons drawn at the head of a man whose only crime was speaking and writing history which is deemed illegal in Austria and several other once-free European countries.

The tale of Irving's arrest is quite captivating and reads like the Mickey Spillane novels that Irving read while in the Viennese prison (his captors thought it too risky to allow him access to non-fiction). The subsequent chapters of *Banged Up* which recount his time in prison don't measure up to the story of his arrest or even ultimately the story of his release. These chapters are apparently taken directly from Irving's prison memoirs and from various letters that he penned while incarcerated for thoughtcrimes.

The tales of strange inmates and lousy conditions experienced in prison are at times redundant. Irving also does a fair amount of self-promotion throughout these chapters telling of earlier days and best-selling books, large crowds and positive reviews from around the world. While this may be justified based on today's proverbial blackout of Irving's writing, those most likely to read this volume are

already aware of his glory-days as a bestselling author. We do gain some insights into the man, Irving, but those most familiar with his writings will learn little that is earth-shaking.

What is significantly missing from this volume is Irving on the Holocaust, the very subject that resulted in his imprisonment in the first place. There can be no doubt, that except for the hardcore anti-revisionist and anti-Irving crowd that David Irving is not a Holocaust denier. Despite the ruling in the David Irving v. Penguin Books and Deborah Lipstadt trial such a charge is both foolish and inaccurate. Irving has spent his life largely as a biographer of leading personalities of the Second World War and has written incredibly little about the Holocaust. Irving's Holocaust-related troubles really began when he agreed to be a defense witness for the much maligned and currently imprisoned Ernst Zündel. His statements at this trial in 1988, his subsequent publishing of *The Leuchter Report* and his provocative comments that followed made in speeches around the world raised up an army of detractors and enemies who sought to bring him down.

Throughout *Banged Up*, Irving mentions that he has three books in the works. The first, *Churchill's War Volume 3* is said to be nearly complete. The second and third books, one a biography of Heinrich Himmler and the other, Irving's memoirs captivated a significant portion of his time while held in Austria.

While mention of the Himmler book may raise excitement in some circles and eyebrows in others, the brief comments reveal little as to what Irving will ultimately write about the Holocaust – a topic that surely cannot be avoided in such a biography. Irving flip-flops even in this slender book leaving the readers little idea what to expect in the forthcoming book. He describes Himmler as a man who “achieved so much that was both grotesque and spectacular.” He also calls him “the evil executor of what is now called the Holocaust.” Such comments, left with no explanation leave the reader expecting that Irving will lay the blame for much of the traditional Holocaust story directly at Himmler's feet. Irving notes that Himmler's daughter Gudrun fears that he will “demolish her late father” purely in an attempt to rehabilitate himself. Irving however, asserts that such a prediction is incorrect.

Revisionists are likely to find some of Irving's statements disconcerting. He mentions for example that the diaries of Frau Himmler only refer to the Jews “two or three times.” He comments “Himmler had seemingly not mentioned the Holocaust to her.” He sums up the situation by saying “Himmler had obviously been keeping his (often horrific) secrets to himself.” But here of course no evidence of the “horrific secrets” is offered. Irving also refers to the deportation of Hungarian Jews to camps in Germany (the Hungarian Jews were actually sent to camps in Poland and primarily Auschwitz). He also describes Belzec as an “extermination centre” without any explanation as to such a conclusion. Oddly he also makes a brief comment about the author of *The Destruction of the European Jews*, “I think highly of [Raul] Hilberg; in fact he shared many of my views.” Irving does not explain which views the two shared.

Also missing from this account is any explanation of the widely reported “recantation” of Irving's Holocaust views that circulated through the world's press immediately following his arrest. At the time, the press announced that Irving said, “I made a mistake when I said there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz.” Some theorized that Irving was posturing to reduce his sentence to speed his return trip to England; others believed that he had made an honest recantation of earlier spoken views. Either way, this volume sheds no light on the situation.

Here and there we get glimpses of Irving's abrasive personality which many excuse for what he has gone through and what he has accomplished. He also makes a number of unnecessarily provocative statements about Jews. Irving seems proud for example of his announcement that "Mel Gibson was right" his most quoted statement following his release from incarceration. Irving never explains what he meant, but rather simply says it was time for "counter attack." Such statements win Irving few friends.

Banged Up belongs on the shelves of Irving collectors and those interested in the evolution of Orwellian tactics now practiced in once-free Europe. It reveals a terrific writer but a hardened man, perhaps made so by his enemies. It will no doubt leave revisionists angry that so little is revealed about his real thoughts on the Holocaust. It will leave the anti-Irving crowd even more certain of his "anti-Semitism."

Clearly we will have to wait for his Himmler biography to determine what Irving really thinks about the Holocaust. Based on the current volume, it is likely to irritate his detractors as well as the revisionists. Regardless, few interested in World War Two or Holocaust history will neglect to buy it to see what Irving has to say.

David Irving's *Banged Up* may be purchased through irvingbooks.com

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